

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1, 3-5, and 7-20. Please amend claims 2 and 6. Please add new claims 21-22. The claims are as follows:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Currently amended) A method for encoding authentication information in the filenames of [[a]] computer files containing digital data, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a master computer file, a first computer file, and a second computer file,
wherein the master computer file has an original filename structured as FNAME₀.EXT₀ such that
FNAME₀ denotes an alphanumeric name portion of the original filename of the master computer
file and EXT₀ denotes an alphanumeric file extension portion of the original filename of the
master computer file, wherein the first computer file has an original filename structured as
FNAME₁.EXT₁ such that FNAME₁ denotes an alphanumeric name portion of the original
filename of the first computer file and EXT₁ denotes an alphanumeric file extension portion of the
original filename of the first computer file, and wherein the second computer file has an original
filename structured as FNAME₂.EXT₂ such that FNAME₂ denotes an alphanumeric name portion
of the original filename of the second computer file and EXT₂ denotes an alphanumeric file
extension portion of the original filename of the second computer file;

generating a signed filename of the master computer file by performing the steps of:

computing a hash value H₀ of only the digital data comprised by the master
computer file,

computing a digital signature of ~~the computer file~~ the hash value H_0 using a private key of a sender; and,

generating the signed filename of the master computer file by encoding said the computed digital signature of the hash value H_0 in $[[a]]$ the original filename of said the master computer file at a predetermined position or using delimiters such that the signed filename of the master computer file comprises the computed digital signature of the hash value H_0 disposed between $FNAME_0$ and EXT_0 , and

associating the signed filename of the master computer file with the master computer file;

generating a signed filename of the first computer file by performing the steps of:

computing a hash value H_1 of only the digital data comprised by the first computer file,

computing a digital signature of the hash value H_1 using the private key of a sender,

generating the signed filename of the first computer file by encoding the computed digital signature of the hash value H_1 in the original filename of the first computer file such that the signed filename of the first computer file comprises the computed digital signature of the hash value H_1 disposed between $FNAME_1$ and EXT_1 , and

associating the signed filename of the first computer file with the first computer file;

generating a signed filename of the second computer file by performing the steps of:

computing a hash value H_2 of only the digital data comprised by the second

computer file,

computing a digital signature of the hash value H_2 using the private key of a sender,

generating the signed filename of the second computer file by encoding the computed digital signature of the hash value H_2 in the original filename of the second computer file such that the signed filename of the second computer file comprises the computed digital signature of the hash value H_2 disposed between $FNAME_2$ and EXT_2 , and

associating the signed filename of the second computer file with the second computer file; and

generating a composite computer file by attaching to the master computer file the first computer file and its associated signed filename and by attaching to the master computer file the second computer file and its associated signed filename.

3-5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 5, wherein said steps of computing [[a]] the hash values H_0 , H_1 , and H_2 use[[s]] a Secure Hash Algorithm or a Message-Digest-5 algorithm.

7-20. (Canceled)

21. (New) The method of claim 2, wherein the master computer file is an electronic mail (e-mail).

22. (New) The method of claim 2, said method further comprising sending, by the sender to a receiver, the composite computer file.